

The *First* Word

Volume 25, Issue 4

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL — HELENA, MONTANA

February 2024

Seek FIRST His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33

Special February Dates

First Edition Book Club.....	Feb. 3
Home of Nancy Bowe	
Dorcas Circle Quilters.....	Feb. 7
W.O.W. Bible Study.....	Feb. 13
Lifelight: Parables of Jesus	
Ash Wednesday.....	Feb. 14
Valentine's Day	
O.W.L.S.	Feb. 15
First Sunday in Lent.....	Feb. 18
Presidents Day.....	Feb. 19
Dorcas Circle Quilters.....	Feb. 21
W.O.W. Bible Study.....	Feb. 27
Lifelight: Parables of Jesus	

Dear members of First Lutheran,

It is hard to know where to start to say *Thank You!* to all those involved in making the annual gift-giving, Christmas dinner, and Christmas service for our developmentally disabled in the Helena area such a wonderful experience, but Susan and I offer our heartfelt *Thank You!* to:



- those who put up the tree for the disabled gifts;
- those who crafted the ornaments, which were beautiful and perfect;
- those who bought and helped to wrap the blankets;
- those who made the blankets;
- those who delivered the blankets;
- those who helped to put together and serve the dinner;
- the youth, who helped costume and lead in the residents;
- those who led the service in music and Word;
- Pastor Miller, who gave a great sermon comparing Jesus to Santa Claus;
- those who cleaned up;
- and for being able to watch as the new staff heard the Word of God.

Most importantly, we thank Jesus for coming into the world to save us!

With grateful hearts,

Susan and Lowell Bartels



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Tell everyone what HE has done
PSALM 26:7

You are cordially invited to join your sisters-in-Christ in Polson, Montana, for the LWML Montana District Convention, April 26-28, 2024! Registration forms and more information can be found inside the Winter *Montana Missive* in the church foyer or online at www.montanadistrictlwml.org!

Lector: *n.* a reader



A lector is the man, woman, or older teen who reads the Old Testament (First Reading) and Epistle (Second Reading) designated for a specific Sunday in the Church Year, a volunteer who enjoys reading aloud to others in a clear, articulate manner. The lector receives the readings via email or snail mail on Thursday or Friday, and then has the opportunity to spend time becoming familiar with the words, their context, and their meaning.

Lectors are needed for each early and late service. If you read well, speak well, and would like to increase your understanding of specific Scripture passages, please consider serving in this capacity. If you are interested, please call Rexetta Mueller (406-461-6274), or Shari Miller in the church office (406-442-5367).

Grab a bottle for Options

Baby bottles for the Options Clinic February fundraiser are now available in Ziegler Hall for all of us to fill with cash, checks, or coins. The monies help provide free services to families with unplanned pregnancies or reproductive health issues.

Options Clinic has a state-of-the-art ultrasound imaging machine that shows parents their very tiny, as yet unborn, precious gift of God. This is just one of the many services provided by the clinic's trained medical professionals.

Won't you help the clinic by picking up a baby bottle from the display table in Ziegler Hall? Plan to return your bottle by the last day of February.

If you would like more information, please speak with Ruth Stelter.



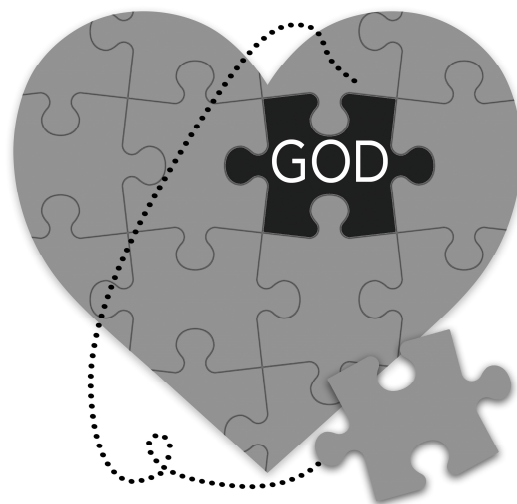
The missing piece in many lives today

Have you ever neared the completion of a jigsaw puzzle, only to discover that a piece or two is missing? That's an apt visual for what it's like to live without God. Blaise Pascal, a 17th-century philosopher, observed: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

Centuries earlier, St. Augustine proclaimed "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." And in the Old Testament, the writer of Ecclesiastes expounded on the meaninglessness of earthly striving and material pursuits. Only God's Spirit can fill our emptiness and satisfy our eternal longings.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full," says Jesus in John 10:10 (NIV). He alone provides the solution for emptiness. What comfort to be filled with — and to find our fulfillment in — our Savior!

— The Newsletter Newsletter



A report from your Board of Finance

	December 2023	FY 2023 Y-T-D
Income (Church & School)	\$ 56,052.60	\$271,395.16
Expense (Church & School)	\$ 41,452.93	\$221,071.13
Net Income/Loss	\$ 14,599.67	\$ 50,324.03

The First Word

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Rev. Larry A. Miller.....Pastor
Linda Fromm.....Editor
Shari Miller.....Calendar/Servant Schedule
Volunteer Staff.....Printing/Collation

Deadline for the March issue of the *First Word* is Wednesday, Feb. 21. Place articles in the *First Word* box in the church office or email to: lindafromm@mac.com

Pastor's *Potpourri* . . .

a mixture of comments concerning our life together in Christ!



Our Current **A**dult **B**ible **C**lass ...

+ Second Corinthians +

Meets each **Sunday**
at **9:30 a.m.**
in the **Fellowship Centre!**

Please join us
as we study these
lessons for life!



Our "Love-Month"

O.W.L.S.* Event

will be **Thursday, February 15!**

Watch upcoming Bulletins and your email box
for the *intimate* details!



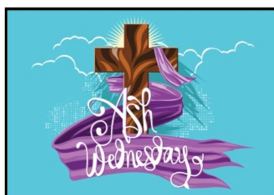
***O**lder **W**iser **L**oving **S**aints are 55+ish



for the cards,
greetings, gifts
and the gift
from the congregation
this Christmas!

Working together
as God's redeemed people
using the gifts God so freely gives
is so encouraging!

Pastor and Shari



Ash Wednesday
(the beginning of Lent)
is February 14!

Speaking of Ashes ...

The life of the baptized is often a daily, fickle journey from unbelief to faith. Job wallows in ashes one day (Job 2) but makes a marvelous confession the next (Job 19): "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" (LSB 461). St. Peter boldly confessed, "You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68) and "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16, yet he tried to deter Jesus from the cross (Matthew 16:22) and denied Him three times (Matthew 26:69-75).

This helps us understand why **one man said to Jesus, "I believe; help my unbelief!"** (Mark 9:24). Dr. Martin Luther says, "{Holy Baptism} indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins . . . and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God" (Small Catechism, "What Baptism Indicates," Part 4).



Even when our old man wins some days, let's not look inwardly to improve! Rather, **let's die in ashes, confess our sin, and rise again in Jesus.** Through the rosy-red waters of Holy Baptism, Jesus washes us by His cross, now and always!

Who will Help Us from Our Ashes?
Jesus has, and He always will!

(Adapted from a devotion
by Rev. Dr. Timothy R. Puls)

Blessings this month
and throughout Lent,

Pastor Miller

HEART strings

Make this heartfelt craft as a decoration or gift.

What you need:

- Yarn
- Scissors
- Parchment paper
- Baking sheet
- Heart-shaped cookie cutters
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- ½ cup water
- Adult help



What you do:

1. Cut yarn into 12-inch pieces.
2. Place cookie cutters atop a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
3. Combine cornstarch and water in a saucepan. Heat mixture over medium heat, stirring until thick and smooth. Remove from heat and cool to form a "glue."
4. Dip each piece of yarn into the mixture to coat completely. Squeeze off any excess.
5. Place yarn in the cookie cutters, allowing pieces to cross and loop within the heart. Add more until the cookie cutter is filled and the yarn looks like a heart.
6. Remove cookie cutters and bake the sheet for two hours at 150°F, or until hearts are dry and hard.

Just for KIDS!



CONNECTED BY LOVE

God's Word is filled with messages about love, which connects us to God and to one another.

Directions: Draw a line from the beginning of each Bible verse (on the left side) through the heart to the rest of the verse (on the right side). Use the Scripture references for help.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| a. We | 1. each other as I have loved you. John 15:12 |
| b. Above all, | 2. has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13 |
| c. My command is this: | 3. But perfect love drives out fear. 1 John 4:18 |
| d. And over all these virtues put on | 4. each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8 |
| e. Greater | 5. the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! 1 John 3:1 |
| f. See what great | 6. because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19 |
| g. There is no fear in | 7. which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:14 |



Answers: a 6, b 4, c 1, d 7, e 2, f 5, g 3

Happy
Valentine's Day

Don't replace “*and*” with “*or*”

— from your Board of Stewardship

We've all heard that stewardship means giving to the church of our time, talents and treasure. This alliterative trinity helps us see that giving is not just about money, but about our whole lives. As we confess in the Small Catechism's explanation of the First Article of the Apostle's Creed, God gives us everything we have and enjoy. First we confess that God gives us “our body and soul, our eyes, ears, and all our members, our reason and all our senses” (SC II). Then we confess that He gives us material things. The time, talents, and treasure trinity places before our eyes the fact that we are to give something of all three of these things toward the mission of the church in thanksgiving for what God has provided. For everything we have, and indeed, everything we are, comes from God's fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.

The problem with this alliterative trinity comes when we replace one little word with another little word — when we replace the word *and* with the word *or*. It is always written with the *and*, but when we read it, we read it with the *or*. Thus this quite helpful trinity, which extolls that everything that we have and are is a gift from God, to be given back in service of His church, turns into a trinity that we can pick and choose from when we serve God. The giving of our time, talents *and* treasure turns into the giving of our time, talents *or* treasure.

Then the question arises: Can we give of our time and talents instead of our treasure? Or perhaps it is the other



way round: Can we give of our treasure and not of our time and talents? But these are the wrong questions. The right question is, can we give of our time and talents in addition to our treasure? Yes, indeed, we are called to give of all three. The things that God gives us are not to be pitted against one another. Rather, they are given to us, and we are to press them all into God's service for benefit of His church and our neighbors in need.

Thus, we give all three. We give our treasure in the form of a generous, first-fruits proportion of our income. We give of our time in generosity for

the benefit of Christ's holy church. We give of our talents in the same manner. Since God gave us all these things, we are called to give generously of all these things in faith toward Him and in fervent love to our neighbors.

For God has provided all these things for us. Out of His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, He gives us each time, talents *AND* treasure as a means to bless those around us. We serve our neighbors with these things, blessing them with the blessings with which God has blessed us. We give of our time, talents and treasure to our families, our society, our church and our local congregations. And we do this because we know that we are not our own. Rather, we belong to God. We have been bought with a price: the holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gave everything — His time, His talents and His treasure — to have us as His own and to live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. We have these things as gifts and blessings from God. Let us then press them all into service for the sake of His love — time, talents and treasure together.

— LCMS Stewardship Ministry

Sharing Christ's love in the spirit of Valentine's Day



The Fellowship Committee is sponsoring a *special “Love Gift & Cookie Party”* for our winter activity here at the church. We are asking members to bake or purchase “Valentine-themed cookies” to deliver to our disabled adult communities here in

the Helena area. We wish to spread some love to them for Valentine's Day!

Please bring three dozen special cookies to the church on Friday, February 9, Saturday, February 10, or on Sunday morning, February 11. We will package the cookies on trays and decorate them in Ziegler Hall after the late service on February 11.

Lowell Bartels has graciously offered to help us deliver them to Westmont Farm in the Dell, Aspen Rehabilitation Services, and Spring Meadow Rehabilitation. We need enough cookies for about 200 people! Please provide regular cookies, not brownies or bars (they do not package well with cookies due to their high moisture content). Get out a favorite recipe and let's get baking!

— The Fellowship Committee

CARDS 4 KIDS ministry raises \$400 in 2023 for First Lutheran Youth group

Janice Larison, who established the CARDS 4 KIDS ministry at First, and who shares her God-given artistic talents and time creating beautiful greeting cards, thanks all those who purchased cards in 2023 to support our youth program in its activities during the year.

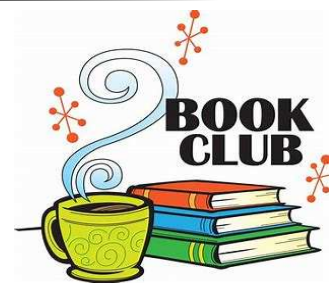
She reports that a total of a little over \$400 was raised in 2023.

Valentine cards will be on sale in Ziegler Hall through Sunday, February 11. Cost per pack is \$5, and there are 10 cards per pack. Cards are suitable for your friends and families. Send a little love and cheer to someone special in your heart.

Janice is currently accepting recycled Christmas and other holiday cards if you have some you wish to share!



Cards shown are for illustrative purposes only. They are not actual card designs.



First Edition Book Club members will meet for luncheon and discussion at 12:15 p.m. on Saturday, February 3, at the home of Nancy Bowe. Members are reading *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt.

If you have not already done so, **please RSVP to Nancy immediately** at 406-449-4042.

The March luncheon and discussion is scheduled for 12:15 p.m. on Saturday, March 2, at the home of Lori Northrup. For the March meeting, the group will read *The Liar's Dictionary* by Eley Williams.

Please RSVP to Lori by Wednesday, February 28, at 406-461-5378.

February Birthdays

February 1

Doris Sparks
Jeff Stefanik

February 2

Jason Ovens
Bill Spellman
Elise Stelter

February 3

Sam Morgenroth

February 4

Mashayla O'Malley

February 6

Kylie Balcerzak
Caleb Hoxie
Kate Johnson

February 7

Jakob Criswell
Miles McCarthy

February 8

Kim Hoxie
Ken Olson

February 10

Jacque Heida
Ruth Stelter

February 11

Brian Buhr

February 12

Dylan Veach

February 13

Loretta Schultz

February 15

Larry Laposky

February 16

Tucker Deppmeier
Benjamin LaForge
Dave Tudor

February 17

Haidyn Boucher
Dureen Lanter

February 20

Sophie Stockburger

February 22

Eric Leitzke
Marie Ringle

February 23

Bob Antonick

February 25

Christopher Shields

February 26

Tami Cook
Beth Schmeltzer
Pam Tudor

February 27

Jared Northrup

February 28

Angela Ewing-Hyyppa
Aleksa Hyyppa
Lori Northrup
Carla Staffedlt

February 29

Abbie Ebert



The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world of not being able to do something and enter God's realm, where everything is possible. He specializes in the impossible. Nothing is too great for His almighty power. Nothing is too small for His love.

— Corrie ten Boom
The Newsletter Newsletter



Happenings at First Lutheran School



Director
Sue Taylor

Get Set Teacher
Shannon Champagne

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher
Lori Radtke

After Care Providers
Pam Worthy/Emily DuPre'

Pastor
Larry A. Miller

Meet our 2023-24 First Lutheran School students!

These unique children of God share their perspective on what makes them special.



Pre-K Class

Get Set Class

Beckham: I am nice. And I want you to have a great day. I want God to have a great day!

Charli: When someone plays Spiderman with me. When someone makes me a star.

Everett: Playing with my sister, and I play video games with my dad on Sundays.

Hollyn: My mom and dad and Jesus make me special. My family makes me special in the world.

Isabella: I feel special when I am with my friends, and when I hug my dad.

Kaden: It's about my sister. I love my sister. I love my grandma so much. I love my family.

Percy: Being Me! Having a brother makes me really, really special.

Presley: Having my cat Everest makes me special. I used to be mean to her, but now I am nice.

Rhys: Doing happy things! Like playing with other people.

Rory: Playing hockey by myself on the ice.

We, the staff of First Lutheran School, are very blessed to be given the honor and opportunity to serve our congregation and students. Thank you for your generosity and kindness to our school staff and students.

Avram: My mom and dad, and getting toys, and my pops, and my brother, and my doggy wagging tail.

Colten: Pointed to himself and said, "Yeah."

Isaac: My mom and dad and Jesus.

Jacie: Playing with my family and giving presents and giving Santa cookies.

Raiden: I like my mom and dad, and when I turn gold that makes me special.

Isla: Jesus!

Myles: Cleaning and making robots with Legos.

Wyatt: Kaven, because I love him! (Wyatt's big brother)

Titus: Giving my mom treats.

Trey: My sisters, because they play different games with me.

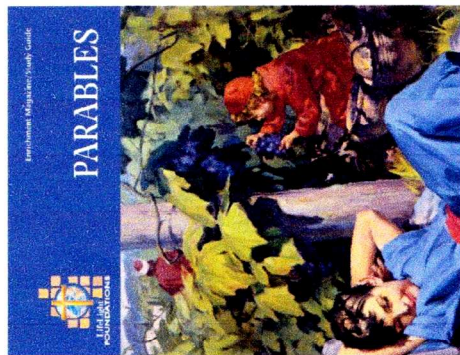
1. Registration is open for the 2024-25 school year. We are accepting applications for children who will be 3 by September 1 through prekindergarten age. You can pick up a registration form from Sue Taylor or on the church's website: www.firstlutheranhelena.org

2. We always welcome volunteers in our classrooms. If you have some free time or a special talent that you would like to share with our students, we would love to have you join us. We would also like new names added to our substitute list. Would you be willing to substitute on days when one of our teachers may be ill?

Women of the Word

This *Lifelight* Bible study will explore the Parables of Jesus. The nine-session study is outlined below.

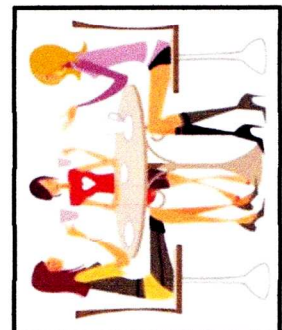
- Session 1: Why Parables?
(Matthew 13:34-35)
- Session 2: Something Old, Something New
(Matthew 9:15-17)
- Session 3: A Most Radical Grace
(John 10:11)
- Session 4: Lost and Found (Luke 15:7)
- Session 5: Keeping Faith (John 15:5)
- Session 6: Living Mercy (Luke 10:36-37)
- Session 7: The Coming Judgment
(Matthew 21:21-32)
- Session 8: Looking for Judgment Day
(Matthew 25:21)
- Session 9: Watching for Eternity
(Matthew 24:45-47)



Our **Women Of the Word (WOW)** group meets every second and fourth Tuesday at 7 p.m. We've completed Session 1, but it's not too late to join us. We meet at the church and we'd love to see you there!

February 13 and 27
March 12 and 26
April 9 and 23
May 14 and 28

WOW! Bible Study,
Parables of Jesus
next study, February 13, 2024
at 7 p.m.



Mark these dates on your planners, tablets, phones, calendars, and **join us!** Talk to Shari Miller for more details.

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FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH is a Congregation of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

THE MISSION of First Lutheran Church is
“Sharing God’s Word with Everyone, Everywhere!”

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Tune in to **“The Lutheran Hour”**—Sundays at 8 a.m. on the Christian Satellite Network 91.1-FM
or listen on **“Family Talk”** on Sirius XM 131
“Woman to Woman”—Sundays at 9:30 p.m. on KMTX 105.3-FM